

SPIDER-MAN UNMASKED

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ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA • SEAN CHEN • SCOTT HANNA

The Sensational **SPIDER-MAN**



RATED A



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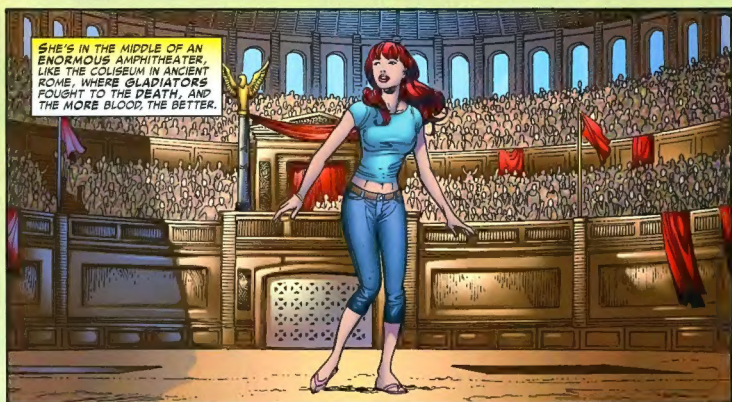
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DIRECT EDITION

-Crain-

SINCE THE WAR BEGAN, MARY JANE'S
BEEN HAVING THIS RECURRING DREAM.

(THE NIGHTS SHE'S
ACTUALLY BEEN
ABLE TO SLEEP.)



SHE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF AN
ENORMOUS AMPHITHEATER,
LIKE THE COLISEUM IN ANCIENT
ROME, WHERE GLADIATORS
FOUGHT TO THE DEATH, AND
THE MORE BLOOD, THE BETTER.



SHE WONTERS,
IN THE DREAM, IF SHE
ISN'T IN A PLAY--

("MACBETH, I WAS
REHEARSING MACBETH...")

--BUT SHE LOOKS
DOWN AND SEES SHE'S
NOT WEARING ANY
KIND OF COSTUME.



THEN SHE
LOOKS UP...

...INTO THE STANDS THAT
RISE ALL AROUND HER LIKE
MOUNTAINS, LIKE
SACRIFICIAL TEMPLES BUILT
TO DARK, HUNGRY GODS...

THEY'RE ALL THERE, GRINNING AND SPITTING AND EATING POPCORN AND FUNNEL CAKES AND HOT DOGS AND CANDY APPLES. IT'S LIKE HALLOWEEN AND A YANKEES/RED SOX GAME AND A MADONNA CONCERT ALL IN ONE.

THE MONSTERS WHO HAVE TRIED TO KILL HER HUSBAND--WHO HAVE TRIED TO KILL HER--OVER THE YEARS.



LOOKING DOWN AT HER AND JEEING, SHOUTING THE MOST...

...THE MOST UNSPEAKABLE, VILE THINGS.

The Husband or the Spider?

ROBERTO AGUIRRE-SACASA WRITER	ANGEL MEDINA PENCILS	SCOTT HANNA INKS	AVAILON'S DAN KEMP COLORS	VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS	CLAYTON CRAIN COVER	ALEJANDRO ARBONA ASST. EDITOR	WARREN SIMONS EDITOR	JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF	DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER
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IT'S LIKE BAMBOO STICKS JABBING IN HER EARS.

MARY JANE MAKES HERSELF NOT SCREAM-- NOT CRY--NOT FALL APART.



SHE TURNS TO LOOK AWAY...



...AND HER EYES LAND ON THE EMPEROR.

FINE DAY FOR IT, HMMM?

("BUT THAT'S... THAT'S TONY, NOT...NOT...")

IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM THAT SHE'S BEEN BROUGHT HERE, FOR HIS AMUSEMENT AND PLEASURE.



MARY JANE STARTS PINCHING HERSELF. TO WAKE UP, WAKE UP, WAKE UP!

BEFORE THINGS GET WORSE.

(TOO LATE, THOUGH; THEY DO.)

BECAUSE SHE LOOKS FROM THE EMPEROR...



...TO HIS QUEEN.

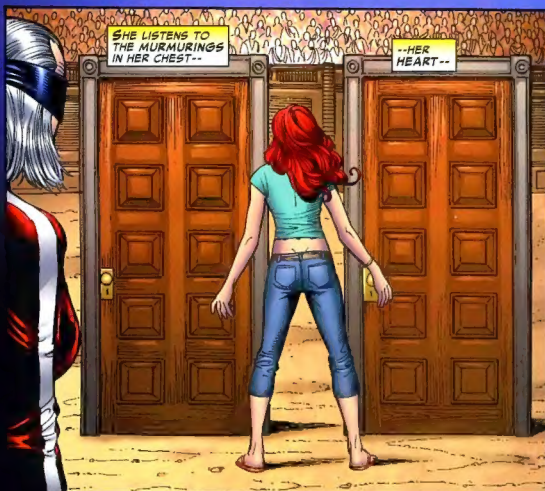
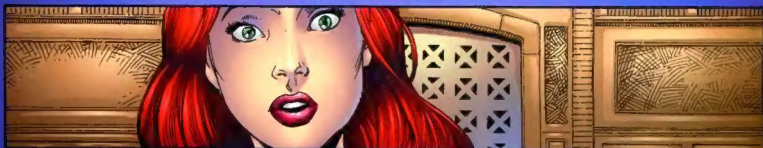
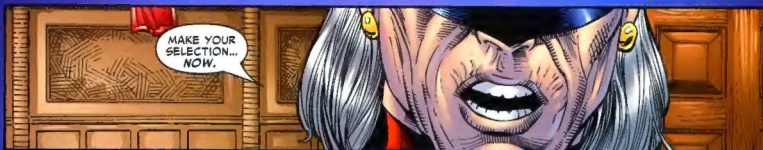
WHO LOOKS FAMILIAR, SOMEHOW.



OH, THAT'S RIGHT:

GWEN.









THESE DAYS, MARY JANE'S CAREFUL ABOUT HOW SHE LOOKS.

NO MAKE UP, HER HAIR PULLED BACK IN A PONYTAIL, THE PLAINEST CLOTHES SHE HAS.



IT'S A FAR CRY FROM HER HEYDAY, WHEN SHE SPENT MORE TIME WORRYING ABOUT HER FRIDAY NIGHT OUTFIT--

--AND WHAT DANCE CLUB SHE'D BE CLOSING DOWN--

--AND WITH WHICH PAGE SIX HOTTIE SHE'D BE DOING THAT--

--THAN--THAN--

"MARY JANE? WHERE ARE YOU OFF TO?"



OH! MAY, WHAT ARE YOU...?

...WHY ARE YOU SITTING WITH THE LIGHTS OFF?



AM I? I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE...

I WAS THINKING ABOUT POOR PETER, I'M AFRAID. AND ALL THAT HE'S BEEN THROUGH LATELY, ALL THE CHANGES. OH, MARY JANE, I'M NOT SURE HE CAN TAKE MUCH MORE OF THIS...



WHICH IS, OF COURSE, MAY'S WAY OF SAYING: "I'M NOT SURE HOW MUCH MORE OF THIS I CAN TAKE."

I...I'VE GIVEN UP ON UNDERESTIMATING YOUR NEPHEW, MAY. I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY ATTACK HE WOULDN'T BOUNCE BACK FROM...

"...HOWEVER BIG
AND BAD IT IS."

COME ON,
RHINO--

--GIVE IT
A REST!!!

URRUUGGHAARR!!

NO, I
KNOW.

I SUPPOSE
A PART OF ME
STILL THINKS OF
HIM AS THAT
SCARED, SKINNY,
LONELY LITTLE
BOY HE USED
TO BE.

MAY...

...I'M...

...I'M GONNA
HEAD OUT FOR
A BIT. DO YOU...
NEED ANY-
THING?

NO, I'M ALL
RIGHT HERE,
WITH MY...

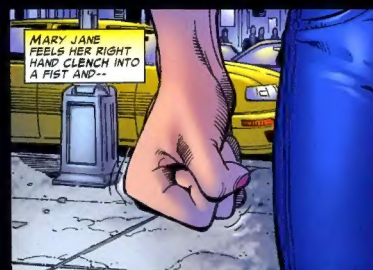
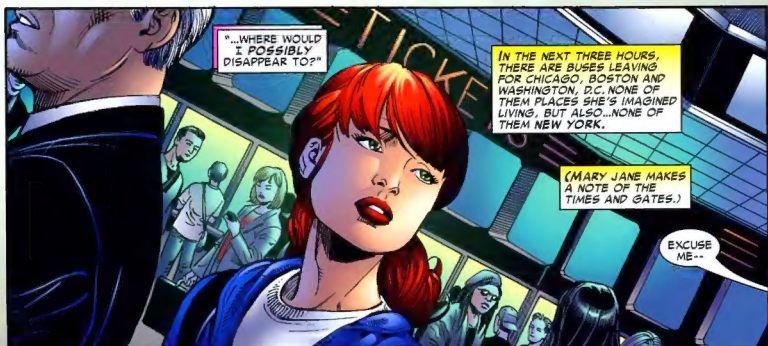
...WELL, I WAS GOING TO
SAY "WITH MY MEMORIES,"
BUT THAT WOULD MAKE ME
SOUND OLD AND FOOLISH.
WOULDN'T IT?

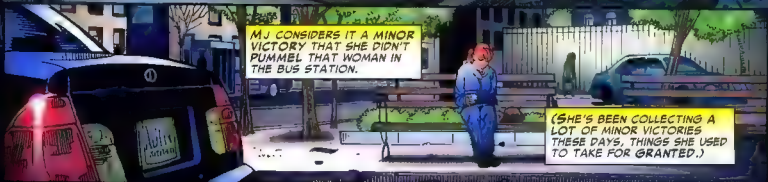
NOT AT
ALL, I'VE BEEN...
REFLECTING A
LOT, TOO.

MARY JANE,
WHEREVER YOU'RE
GOING RIGHT NOW,
EVEN THOUGH
PETER TOLD US TO
STAY PUT...

...YOU ARE
COMING BACK,
AREN'T YOU?

...
OF
COURSE,
AUNT
MAY...







HALF AN HOUR LATER, AT
THEIR DESIGNATED
MEETING TIME AND PLACE.

IT SEEMED AN ODD CHOICE,
MADAME TUSSAUD'S WAX
MUSEUM IN TIMES SQUARE.

SPECIFICALLY
ITS HALL OF
HEROES.

BUT UNDER THE CURRENT
POLITICAL CLIMATE,
OPTIONS ARE LIMITED, AND...



...THE GOOD
THING ABOUT THIS
PLACE IS THAT NO SELF-
RESPECTING HERO
WOULD BE CAUGHT
DEAD HERE.

HI,
MARY JANE.
SORRY I'M
LATE.

MARY JANE THINKS
SHE SEES A SLIGHT
DISTORTION IN THE AIR
ON HER RIGHT, SO SHE
TURNS TO IT AND SAYS:

UH, NO
PROBLEM.
THANKS FOR
MEETING ME...
UH...

IT'S ALL
RIGHT, YOU
CAN CALL
ME SUE.

AND I'M
STANDING
TO YOUR LEFT,
BY THE WAY.

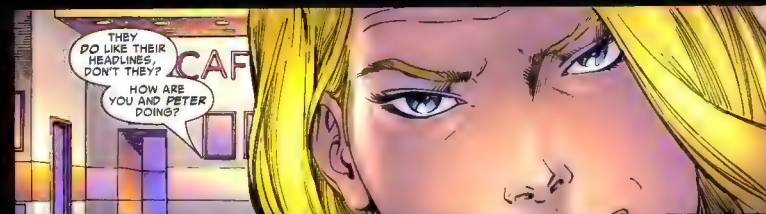
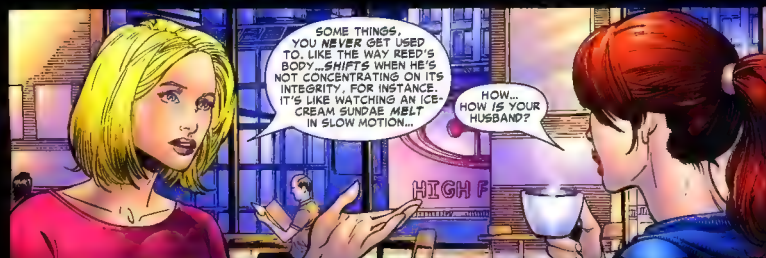
UH...
OKAY. SORRY,
I JUST...

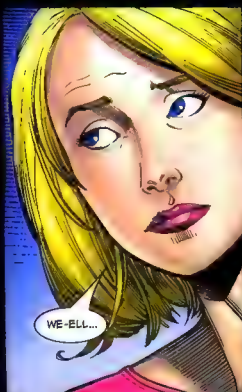
...I MEAN,
THIS IS KIND
OF WEIRD.

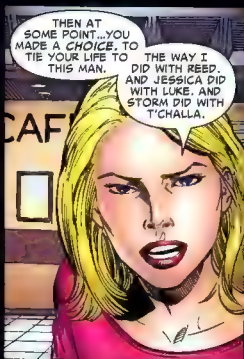
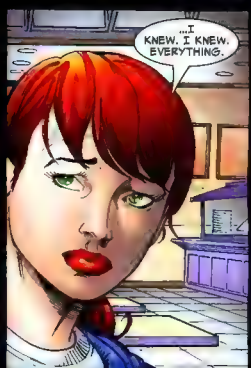
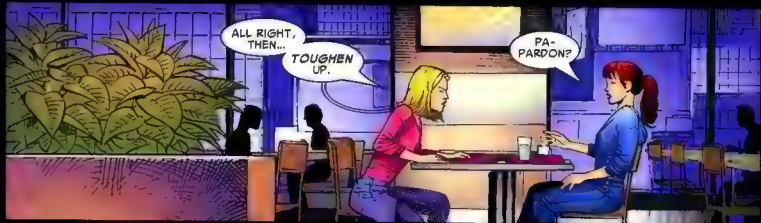
I UNDERSTAND.
THERE'S A CAFETERIA
ON THE FOURTH FLOOR.
WE CAN GO THERE,
IF YOU WANT...

THAT
WOULD BE
GREAT.

(ESPECIALLY
SINCE, YOU KNOW,
PEOPLE ARE
STARTING TO
STARE.)









THEY TALK AWHILE LONGER. THEN THEY PAY THEIR BILL, AND MARY JANE THANKS THE INVISIBLE WOMAN FOR HER TIME, AND STANDS TO GO.

SHE DOESN'T WANT TO SAY IT, BUT SHE CAN'T HELP HERSELF.

ALL THOSE WOMEN YOU MENTIONED... YOU, JESSICA, STORM...
...YOU'RE ALL SUPER-POWERED.



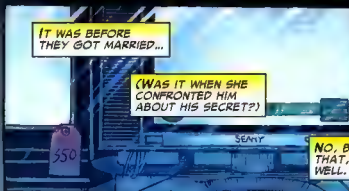
I DON'T HAVE THAT TO LEAN ON.



TEN BLOCKS LATER, THOUGH, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN'S WORDS STILL HAUNT HER.

AND SHE FINDS HERSELF FIGHTING TO REMEMBER THE MOMENT.

WHEN SHE DECIDED: "MY LIFE IS WITH THIS MAN, FOREVER AND ALWAYS."



IT WAS BEFORE THEY GOT MARRIED...

(WAS IT WHEN SHE CONFRONTED HIM ABOUT HIS SECRET?)

NO, BEFORE THAT, AS WELL. IT WAS...




WE SHOULD GET STARTED. I'M MEETING NORMAN AT THE BRIDGE IN HALF AN HOUR.




AND AS QUICK AS TAKING A BREATH, IT COMES BACK TO HER.

SHE'D JUST HEARD THE NEWS ABOUT GWEN'S DEATH AT THE HANDS OF THE GREEN GOBLIN.



BEREFT, SHE WAITED FOR PETER AT HIS APARTMENT, IMAGINING THE SICKENING SOUND OF GWEN'S NECK SNAPPING.




SHE HEARS HIS KEY IN THE LOCK, WATCHES HIM PUSH OPEN THE DOOR...AND CURSES HERSELF FOR NOT THINKING OF WHAT TO SAY IN ADVANCE.

HEY, PETER, I HEARD ABOUT GWEN. I'M REALLY TORN UP--



HIS ANGER ISN'T UNEXPECTED. ITS VICIOUSNESS IS.


YOU? "TORN UP"? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH, MARY JANE. YOU WOULDN'T BE SORRY IF YOUR OWN MOTHER DIED. WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT STRAIGHTS LIKE ME AND GWEN?



HIS WORDS ARE LIKE FISTS, PUMMELING HER TOWARDS THE OPEN DOOR.

GO ON-- GET OUT OF HERE.

I KNOW HOW YOU HATE SICKBEDS.



AND HER FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO GO, TO FLEE THE HORROR AND PAIN STARTING TO ENVELOP THIS MAN'S LIFE...

...BUT THEN
SHE STOPPED.

AND SEARCHED
HER HEART.

AND MADE
A CHOICE.

AND A DOOR
CLOSES
IN THE PAST...

CLICK!

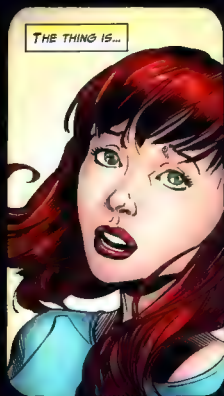
...AS, IN THE PRESENT, MARY
JANE FACES ANOTHER ONE,
THINKING

"THAT WAS WHEN I KNEW
I WAS IN LOVE WITH HIM.
THAT DAY IN HIS APARTMENT,
AFTER GWEN. WHEN NOTHING
WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN
MY BEING WITH HIM."

FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
DOOR, SHE HEARS A SHUFFLING.
A STRANGE, THUMPING SOUND.
MAY'S VOICE, MUFFLED.

SHE REACHES
FOR THE
DOORKNOB...

...AND THE DREAM
FROM LAST NIGHT
RISES. SUDDENLY,
SHE'S BACK IN THAT
ARENA AGAIN...





SO ALL
OF YOU...

CAN. GO.

TO--



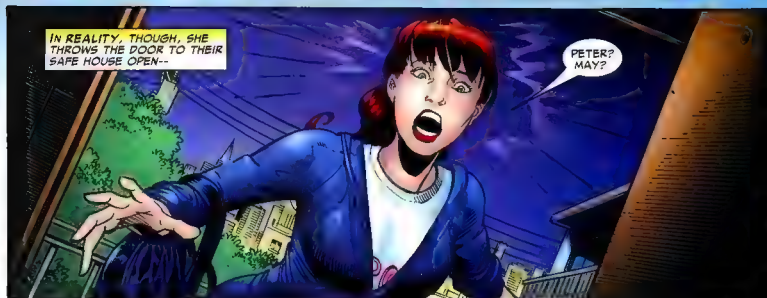
EYES SHUT,
SHE THROWS THE
DOOR OPEN--



--AND IN HER MIND,
PETER'S THERE--

YOU WEREN'T
KIDDING ABOUT THE
JACKPOT. C'MERE,
GORGEOUS.

--AND EVERY-
THING IS GOING
TO BE ALL RIGHT.



IN REALITY, THOUGH, SHE
THROWS THE DOOR TO THEIR
SAFE HOUSE OPEN--

PETER?
MAY?

--AND NOTHING
WILL EVER BE ALL
RIGHT AGAIN.

MARY
JANE! HELP
ME!
**HELP
ME!**



NEXT ISSUE: WOUNDS!

The Sensational SPIDER-MAN

I am at no loss for nice things to say about the Aguirre-Sacasa/Medina SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN. This book is fantastic. These two have accomplished something rare: they've updated a title without being patronizing. Marvel has seen about as many relaunches as an unsuccessful space program. These relaunches often try (embarrassingly) to make a title "fresh" and "hip" for today's audience. In the process, the title comes across like an adult trying to act cool: goofy and humiliating, usually to all involved.

Thanks for the kind words, Geoff. Have you seen Poochie the Dog from "The Simpsons"? I love Poochie. "I have to go now. My planet needs me."

SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN's current incarnation is the antithesis of this oft-repeated gaffe. An artist and writer have reinvigorated an established character, and not just by re-creating him, but by exposing his inherent richness. Their first story arc together, "Feral," was an apt title, given the raw, pulsating energy of Medina's pencils. This is the most exciting Spider-Man since Todd McFarlane's run in the early '90s, and Medina seems to take a few cues from that master. Both men accentuate Peter Parker's title flexibility while still capturing his super-strength. These two traits, the spider-like flexibility and the powerful muscles, seem counterintuitive to a reader's mind, and it takes talent to visually convey both abilities. The juxtaposition of these characteristics is part of what makes Spider-Man so interesting, and when the juxtaposition is done right, it's flat-out impressive.

Aguirre-Sacasa deserves no less of a nod. Especially in the midst of CIVIL WAR angst and the kind of psychological turmoil Peter Parker's undergoing in AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, it's good to be reminded of his most endearing, American trait: his indefatigable sense of humor. Spidey's humor under Aguirre-Sacasa's guidance is appropriately self-deprecating, but also knows when to train its sights on pretentious super-villains. Add to this the humanity Aguirre-Sacasa gives Peter Parker (as in the heartfelt yet un-maudlin SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN #28), and you've got the same believable vulnerability that made Spidey so special when Steve Ditko and Stan Lee first introduced him.

If a fourth Spider-Man movie is made, I can only hope both artists will be thoroughly involved.

Geoff Hoppe

Wow, Geoff! Thanks for the kind words. I'm not going to let the creative team read this letter for fear of it going to their heads, but your words are greatly appreciated. I'm happy that you're liking the book so much, and think we have a few great issues coming down the line...

Wow. Fabulous issue. With me being very old school, it's nice to see Chameleon, Molten Man, Scarcrow, Swarm and the forever missing Liz Allan! Hopefully Roberto, Angel and Scott are here to stay, and we also won't be interrupted with filler issues after each three-part series. Although I do absolutely hate his new Iron Man wannabe costume, I'll be hanging around until Montana and Fancy Dan whoop Spidey's butt.

Thanks,
Ray D. Smith

Thanks writing in, Ray. Montana and Fancy Dan...hmmm...it has been some time since we've seen the Enforcers, hasn't it...?

Hi, Warren.

What a position to be in, eh? You get either Angel and Scott or Clayton each and every month. Not a bad deal at all.

I said I'd keep you informed as to how this arc is going, and never let it be said that I'm not a man of my word!

Everything flowed smoothly from the opening with Electro (love those old-timers!), through Mary Jane's stinging encounter to the Black Cat and Liz's unwelcome guests, stopping off for a quick look into the Chameleon's psyche.

Roberto can certainly keep you hooked, and I'll be here to hopefully see Aunt May outsmart Dmitri!

Cheers,
John Rule
Manchester, England

Hey, John, be careful of elderly women bearing cookies...

I just want to thank you for the work you're doing on SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN. I've been a fan about 20 years and I've seen you through some pretty lackluster storylines. I'm sorry but "The Other" just fell flat (however, I enjoyed "The Clone Saga"). What you guys are doing in this title is great though, it feels like the books I grew up on and loved.

Characters like Stegorn, Swarm, Will-O'-The-Wisp, Molten Man...it's fantastic to see these guys again. I also love that the Black Cat is a regular supporting character—my favorite Spidey days were old SPECTACULAR, when Black Cat was an integral part of the book. My first issue was Black Cat vs. Sabretooth and I haven't stopped buying since. Looking forward to seeing her in HEROES FOR HIRE and CLAWS as well. Keep it up.

P.S. How about a little Speed Demon and Boomerang?

Chad Daros
Halifax, Nova Scotia,
Canada

Chad, issue #34 is all about the Black Cat, and we were using the SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN Black Cat and Sabretooth issues as research...I think you're going to be in for a treat.

Dear Spider-Team,

After reading SENSATIONAL #30, which isn't even the end of the 3-parter, I just had to write in and say how fantastic a job you guys are doing on the book.

First of all, kudos have to go to Roberto for his absolutely perfect portrayal of Peter and Spider-Man, and what appears to be a long-standing knowledge of the Spider-friends and his rogues' gallery. While I thoroughly enjoy JMS' modern take on Spider-Man, I have to say that Roberto's telling Spidey stories that have that classic Lee/Ditko/Romita feel to them while being set in the modern day is superb. Not to mention that his creativity with the abilities of the new costume is top-notch. This is my first exposure to Roberto's work and I plan to go and look for some more.

We can't, of course, praise this book without

talking about Angel Medina's pencils. The dynamic feel he brings to each page through his use of motion lines, different angles, and body positions is perfect for a book like this. Not to mention his take on the classic villains and the new Spider-costume is some of the best stuff I have seen in a while. As for Scott Hanna, there probably isn't much I can say about him that hasn't been said before: hands down, he is easily one of the best inkers in the business and his ink stylings are perfect for Angel's pencils. Let's not forget Dan Kemp, whose work I thought was great when he was colouring JURR's art in AMAZING, but who now has taken it to the next level. Oh yeah...and there is that Young Gun guy...what's his name? C. Grain? Distinctively different than Angel, but without a doubt one of the most creative artists I have seen in a while. Great job to all!

Hope you boys stay around for a while...a LOOOONG while, because these are some of the funnest Spider-Man stories I have read. After all, Warren, think about it: Roberto, Angel, Scott, Dan and Clayton have just scratched the surface on Spidey's rogues' gallery. I would say that there are at least enough of them to keep these guys on the book for about 10 more years. Well, OK, maybe 6, because of how many Roberto likes to use in each tale.

Regards,
Brian Johnson
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada

Thanks for vote of confidence, Brian. It's been 10 issues since Roberto and Angel took over this title, and I'm really proud of their run so far. Along with Clayton, and now Sean, I feel like we're in great shape! See you in 30.

--Warren

NEXT ISSUE:



**AUNT MAY
AIN'T HAPPY!!!**

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KRYPTONIA - PCP

DCP Remembers...

Dave Cockrum



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